

Business&ITCenter21 Closes the Gap between What is Taught and What Students Need for the Workplace



**Merrill F. West High School
Tracy Unified School District**

SCHOOL TYPE:

Academy for Business and Law
Merrill F. West High School

COURSE TITLES:

- Career Pathways: Public Services Administration Pathway
 - Computer Literacy
 - Computer Applications
 - Entrepreneurship

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Lynn Huggins, a teacher at Merrill F. West High School in Tracy, CA, is a veteran teacher of career pathways. Huggins uses Business&ITCenter21 to bridge the disconnect between what students learn and what they need for their futures.

Situation

Throughout Huggins' years in educating students in computer literacy and computer applications, she has always struggled with the lag between the available curriculum and the knowledge needed in her students' immediate futures. Whether students planned to go on to university, post-secondary education, the military, a technical school, or the workplace, she had concerns about the students' preparedness for the ever-changing skills required to move ahead.

And then Huggins found out about Business&ITCenter21 Online. "We were very fortunate to attend a conference for CTE programs where we were introduced to Applied Educational Systems software that puts the career pathways into logical modules that students can use online," says Huggins.

Solution

"Business&ITCenter21 is the first bold step towards bridging the big disconnect, the lag between what we are teaching and what students need to know to be successful in the workplace," says Lynn Huggins.

She explains how the program is "a different way of teaching the same information for Computer Literacy, Computer Applications, and Entrepreneurship." And sets them up "to have a viable career and also have the skills when they get to the employer, the skill sets they need for employability," Huggins adds.

She is very happy with the system so far. She points out strengths of Business&ITCenter21 including the length

of lessons, the instant feedback that gives students a sense of accomplishment, and the small chunks of content that are interactive and engaging.

Huggins appreciates the variety of the activities and how the curriculum hits on all those things that students will have to deal with in their futures. They receive training and it is interactive and engaging, the way this generation wants to learn—the way they have been conditioned by their environment to learn.



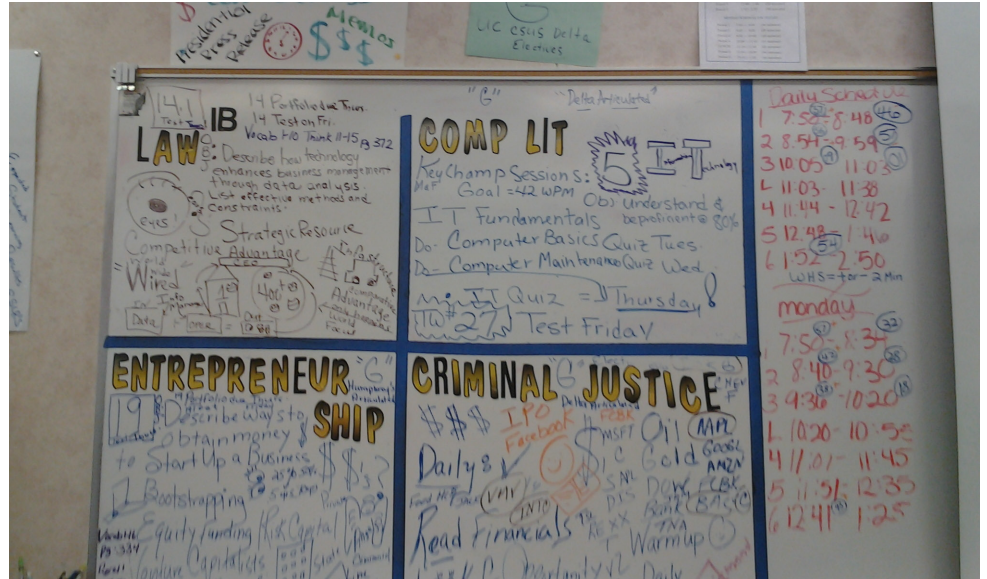
And in regards to teachers, Huggins explains, "Somehow we [teachers] have to get this kind of training. The hardest thing to do is train the people like me, that when there's a problem that it's not necessarily the program or the curriculum. The reality is that some students circumnavigate the system." She goes on to explain that in her opinion "the textbook is dead." Teachers need to embrace podcasts and other multimedia and use it to refine and mold brief, relevant lectures. They will need to become facilitators and make themselves available to answer student questions and direct their learning and allow them to use these tools. "It doesn't mean we aren't teaching, it means we'll have the materials and use them to build effective combinations of lectures and other tools," she says.

“Business&ITCenter21 is the first bold step in bridging the big disconnect—the lag between what we are teaching and what students need to know to be successful in the workplace,”

says Lynn Huggins.

Huggins also describes her experience with the program. She did the training that was provided, got on with her logon information, and “taught myself.” Huggins did the first unit to get an idea of how it works. She quickly found that everything she taught was going to be covered in these modules, so she got students on and got them started with it right away.

answer quiz and test questions. But the system denies them access to content and reroutes them to their location in the quiz or test. THAT is the answer! And it does a good job of preventing invalid scores.” She goes on to reiterate that students will always try to circumnavigate the system. You cannot stop them from trying to do so, but you can put checks and balances in



Huggin’s classroom has 35 computers, grouped by teams of five. Each group has a team leader that can answer questions for the rest of the group. Huggins displays goals or modules on the overhead with a due date. She also uses the overhead to introduce topic and why it is important, but not in depth. She explains that students want to get going on the program. “They don’t want rehash. They like to go quickly with short sets of directions and immediate help from teacher when needed,” she says.

As should be expected, students will test the system. Huggins describes an incident when a problem occurred. A student insisted it was the software. After trying to troubleshoot the issue, Huggins saw the Live Chat feature in the program and contacted support. She did this on the overhead projector, so everyone saw it. Through the Live Chat conversation, Huggins and her students discovered that they cannot access the content while taking a quiz or test. She says, “you can’t prevent students trying to look back at content to

place to greatly reduce their ability to do so. “I applaud you for not trying to control something that you cannot control,” Huggins says.

Results

“Ten years I’ve been waiting for this,” Huggins explains, “the way the program teaches the different kinds of elements of what someone who will work in IT will need, such as hardware, software, accounting, management...it is all integrated. So you’ll get some marketing, some computer applications—a comprehensive education. But you will have the skills to hold down a job and have the skills that industry is telling us you absolutely have to have or they have to choose someone else.”

“We’re very happy with Business&ITCenter21. I can’t imagine anybody having any compunction about using this material!”



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